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Advancement of women

Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 58/145 of 22 December 2003 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixtieth session a report on the status of the Convention and the implementation of the resolution.

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I. Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly by resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979. It was opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York on 1 March 1980 and, in accordance with article 27, entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. As at 31 July 2005, 180 States had ratified, acceded or succeeded to the Convention, of which 77 had acceded to it and seven had succeeded to it. This represents an additional six ratifications since the submission of the last report (see A/58/341, covering the period from 31 July 2002 to 31 July 2003). The most recent States to ratify or accede to the Convention were Kiribati, on 17 March 2004; Micronesia (Federated States of), on 1 September 2004; Monaco, on 18 March 2005; San Marino, on 10 December 2003; Swaziland, on 26 March 2004; and the United Arab Emirates, on 6 October 2004. The list of States parties to the Convention and the dates of their ratification or accession to the Convention are contained in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its thirty-second and thirty-third sessions.[1]

3. As at 31 July 2005, 45 States parties had deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, relating to the periodicity and duration of the meetings of the Committee. The additional five acceptances since the submission of the last report were by the following States parties: Croatia, on 24 October 2003; Ireland, on 11 June 2004; Lithuania, on 5 August 2004; the Philippines, on 12 November 2003; and Uruguay, on 8 January 2004.

4. During the period from 31 July 2003 to 31 July 2005, reservations were entered by Micronesia (Federated States of) to article 2 (f), article 5, article 11, paragraph 1 (d), article 11, paragraph 2 (b), article 16 and article 29, paragraph 1; Monaco to article 7, paragraph (b), article 9, article 16, paragraph 1 (g) and (e) and article 29, paragraph 2; and the United Arab Emirates to article 2 (f), article 9, article 15, paragraph 2, article 16 and article 29, paragraph 1.

5. During the same period, objections to reservations were received from Austria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

6. During the same period, withdrawals of reservations were received from France regarding article 5 (b) and article 16 (1) (d), Ireland to article 13 (b) and (c), New Zealand to article 11 (2) (b) and Switzerland to article 7 (b). The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland informed the Secretary-General of a modification of a reservation.

II. Status of the Optional Protocol to the Convention

7. By its resolution 54/4 of 6 October 1999, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Optional Protocol entitles individuals and groups of individuals to submit communications concerning alleged violations of

the Convention in a State party to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It also allows the Committee to inquire of its own motion into grave or systematic violations of the Convention. The Optional Protocol was opened for signature, ratification and accession at United Nations Headquarters on 10 December 1999 and entered into force on 22 December 2000.

8. As at 31 July 2005, 71 States parties had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol, with 76 States parties having signed it. This represents an increase of 17 ratifications since the submission of the last report. States parties to adhere to the Optional Protocol during the period from 31 July 2003 to 31 July 2005 were: Belarus, on 3 February 2004; Belgium, on 17 June 2004; Cameroon, on 7 January 2005; Gabon, on 5 November 2004; Lesotho, on 24 September 2004; the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on 18 June 2004; Lithuania, on 5 August 2004; the Niger, on 30 September 2004; Nigeria, on 22 November 2004; the Philippines, on 12 November 2003; Poland, on 22 December 2003; Romania, on 25 August 2003; the Russian Federation, on 28 July 2004; Slovenia, on 23 September 2004; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 17 October 2003; Ukraine, on 26 September 2003; and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on 17 December 2004.

III. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

A. Capacity to fulfil its mandate

Fulfilment by States parties of reporting obligations

9. Article 18, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides that States parties undertake to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention within one year after its entry into force for the State party concerned, and thereafter at least every four years and, further, whenever the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women so requests.

10. Between 1 August 2003 and 31 July 2005, the Secretary-General received the reports of the following 65 States parties: Angola (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Argentina (follow-up report); Australia (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Austria (sixth periodic report); Azerbaijan (combined second and third periodic report); Bosnia and Herzegovina (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Burkina Faso (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Cambodia (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Cape Verde (combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); Chile (fourth periodic report); China (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Colombia (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Croatia (combined second and third periodic report); Cuba (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Cyprus (combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report); the Czech Republic (third periodic report); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Denmark (sixth periodic report); Equatorial Guinea (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Eritrea (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Finland (fifth periodic report); Georgia (combined second and third periodic report); Ghana (combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Greece (sixth periodic report);

Guinea (combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); Guatemala (sixth periodic report); Iceland (fifth periodic report); Indonesia (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Israel (fourth periodic report); Italy (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); Jamaica (fifth periodic report); Kazakhstan (second periodic report); Lebanon (initial report and second periodic report); Lithuania (third periodic report); Malawi (combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Malaysia (combined initial and second periodic report); Maldives (combined second and third periodic report); Mali (combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Mauritania (initial report); Mauritius (combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Mozambique (combined initial and second periodic report); Namibia (combined second and third periodic report); the Netherlands (fourth periodic report); Nicaragua (sixth periodic report); the Niger (combined first and second periodic report); Pakistan (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Paraguay (combined third and fourth, and fifth periodic report); Peru (sixth period report); the Philippines (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Poland (combined fourth and fifth, and sixth periodic reports); the Republic of Moldova (combined second and third periodic report); Romania (sixth periodic report); Singapore (third periodic report); Suriname (third periodic report); Tajikistan (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Thailand (combined fourth and fifth periodic report); the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Togo (combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Turkmenistan (combined initial and second periodic report); the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (fifth periodic report); Uzbekistan (combined second and third periodic report); Vanuatu (combined initial, second and third periodic report); Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); and Viet Nam (combined fifth and sixth periodic report).

11. At its thirtieth, thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions, held from 12 to 30 January 2004, 6 to 23 July 2004, 10 to 28 January 2005 and 5 to 22 July 2005, respectively, the Committee considered 78 reports submitted by 32 States parties: two initial reports (Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Lebanon); one combined initial and second periodic report (Kuwait); six combined initial, second and third periodic reports (Angola, Benin, Gambia, Latvia, Malta and Samoa); one combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report (Lao People's Democratic Republic); one combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report (Bhutan); three second periodic reports (Algeria, Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon); three combined second and third periodic reports (Croatia, Equatorial Guinea and Nepal); one combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report (Gabon); one third periodic report (Israel); one combined third and fourth periodic report (Paraguay); one combined third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report (Guyana); eight combined fourth and fifth periodic reports (Angola, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ireland, Italy, Nigeria and Turkey); one combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report (Belarus); five fifth periodic reports (Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Germany, Paraguay and Spain); and one follow-up report (Argentina).

Reports awaiting consideration and overdue reports

12. As at 31 July 2005, 128 reports (mainly combined) submitted by 58 States parties had yet to be considered by the Committee. The Committee will consider the reports of eight States parties during its thirty-fourth session, in January 2006.

13. As at 31 July 2005, there were 187 overdue reports, of which 29 were initial reports, 29 second periodic reports, 35 third periodic reports, 37 fourth periodic reports, 24 fifth periodic reports and 33 sixth periodic reports. A total of 98 States had overdue reports.

B. Working methods of the Committee

14. During the reporting period, the Committee took significant new initiatives to enhance its working methods. Many of the initiatives were agreed upon at an informal meeting held by the Committee from 12 to 14 May 2004 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, at the invitation of one of its members, and with the financial support of the Government of the Netherlands. The agreements reached were formally adopted by the Committee at its thirty-first session, in July 2004.

15. The Committee took a number of steps to enhance the constructive dialogue with States parties. It decided to prepare lists of issues and questions also for initial reports, a decision that took effect at its thirty-second session. At the same time, the Committee reduced the number of meetings allocated for consideration of initial reports from three to two. In an effort to enhance the interactive nature of the constructive dialogue, the Committee now uses the same format for consideration of both initial and periodic reports. Representatives of States parties are expected to respond immediately to each set of questions posed orally by experts, rather than being invited to respond to all questions at a subsequent meeting.

16. The Committee further enhanced the role of the country rapporteur in the preparation of the list of issues and questions and the drafting of the concluding comments, including priorities to be addressed. At the same time, the Committee has started to use country task forces for consideration of periodic reports, where a limited number of experts take the lead in constructive dialogue. The Committee assessed the lessons learned from this experience at its thirty-second and thirty-third sessions, and identified strengths as well as areas for improvement. In general, experts strongly supported the continuation of this method of work at the thirty-fourth session. While country task forces will be established for consideration of up to four reporting States (periodic reports) at the thirty-fourth session, modalities will continue to be used in a flexible manner. The Committee continues to allocate two meetings for consideration of periodic reports.

17. The Committee took steps towards adopting more focused concluding comments for periodic reports. These efforts have led to the inclusion, in the section on critical areas of concern and recommendations, of a new opening paragraph to assess the general framework for the implementation of the Convention in the State party. The paragraph also refers to, or reiterates, issues of concern highlighted in previous concluding comments, as well as action, or lack of such action, taken by the State party. The Committee will continue consideration of prioritization of concerns at its thirty-fourth session. The Committee has also added several new closing paragraphs in all concluding comments, including on the role of the seven

major human rights instruments in the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life; the utilization of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the implementation of the Convention; and the relationship between the full and effective implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

18. The Committee encourages States parties to adhere to the page limitations for reports established in its guidelines for reporting (100 pages for initial and 70 pages for periodic reports). At the thirty-first session, the Committee set a page limitation of 25 to 30 pages for the responses to the list of issues and questions, with the possibility of attaching a limited number of additional pages of statistical data only. The secretariat is requested to play a proactive role in bringing these page limitations to the attention of States parties. The Committee also agreed that the list of issues and questions will contain not more than a total of 30 clear and direct questions. It also decided to keep the work of the pre-session working group under review.

19. The Committee continued its practice of meeting informally with non-governmental organizations wishing to present country-specific information on States parties whose reports were before it, usually at the beginning of the first and second weeks of the session. The pre-session working group also provides an opportunity for non-governmental organizations to present oral information.

20. At its thirty-third session, the Committee received, for the first time, information from a national human rights institution in relation to a reporting State. It welcomed this development, and allocated a separate segment during the informal meeting with non-governmental organizations for an oral presentation by the institution. The Committee agreed to develop modalities for interaction with national human rights institutions in coordination with other human rights treaty bodies, and will prepare proposals for submission to the fifth inter-committee meeting in 2006.

21. The Committee continued its efforts to encourage States parties to report under article 18 of the Convention. It decided to consider implementation of the Convention in the absence of a report only as a last resort and in the presence of a delegation. Two States parties, namely Cape Verde and Saint Lucia, whose initial reports under article 18 of the Convention were more than 10 years overdue, were notified of the Committee's intention to take up implementation of the Convention at the thirty-fifth session. They were invited to submit all their overdue reports as a combined report by June 2005. Cape Verde submitted its report in June 2005.

22. The Committee confirmed its decision 21/1 on reports requested on an exceptional basis and under article 18, paragraph 1 (b), in order to obtain and examine the information on an actual or potential violation of women's human rights, where there is special cause for concern about such violation, and adopted revised standards and guidelines.

23. The Committee included an overview of its current working methods for the first time in its report on its thirtieth session. This overview intends to make the Committee's working methods more transparent and readily accessible to States parties and others interested in the implementation of the Convention. The overview will be regularly updated, and is also available on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The third inter-committee meeting subsequently requested

the secretariat of each of the treaty bodies to produce a document detailing its working methods, for inclusion in its annual report, or issued as a separate document (see A/59/254).

24. During the period under review, the Committee adopted general recommendation 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, on temporary special measures (thirtieth session). It commenced work on its next general recommendation, on article 2 of the Convention. It also reviewed its work programme for the preparation of general recommendations, and took note that several experts had volunteered to work on such general recommendations (thirty-second session).

25. The Committee also continued its practice of adopting statements in relation to particular events or developments. During the reporting period, these included: a statement on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly (adopted inter-sessionally after the thirty-first session); three statements on the situation of women in Iraq (thirtieth, thirty-first and thirty-third sessions); a statement in regard to the tsunami disaster that occurred in South-East Asia on 26 December 2004 (thirty-second session); and a statement on the occasion of the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (thirty-second session).

26. During its thirty-third session, the Committee considered the question of the advisability of a special rapporteur on discriminatory legislation, as requested by the Commission on the Status of Women in its resolution 49/3[2] and provided its views on the issue. Experts also had an exchange of views on the Secretary-General's study on violence against women, based on a briefing by its secretariat. Experts agreed to continue the discussion at the Committee's thirty-fourth session, on the basis of a provisional outline and any draft chapters that would be available at that time. Two members of the Committee serve on the advisory committee for the study.

27. The Committee continued to contribute actively to the work of the human rights treaty bodies, especially within the framework of the annual meetings of chairpersons of treaty bodies, and the inter-committee meeting. The Chairperson, as well as designated members of the Committee, participated in these meetings in 2004 (21 to 25 June 2004) and 2005 (20 to 24 June 2005). The Committee took a particular interest in the proposals for harmonized guidelines on reporting under international human rights treaties and proposed guidelines for an expanded core document and treaty-specific targeted reports, and submitted its preliminary views to the 2005 meeting (HRI/MC/2005/6/Add.1). It subsequently appointed a member who would serve on a working group on the draft of harmonized reporting guidelines. The group would be composed of one expert from each of the seven treaty bodies, in order to finalize the draft guidelines for consideration and eventual adoption by each of the committees. The Committee also designated an expert to serve on a working group on reservations which would report to the inter-committee meeting in 2006.

28. In recent years, the Committee has been able to hold informal inter-sessional meetings that allowed the Committee to discuss and reach agreement on a number of issues concerning substantive aspects and working methods and which could not be accommodated during its regular sessions. Such meetings took place in Madrid, in 1995; in Berlin, in 2000; in Lund, Sweden, in 2002; and in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 2004. The Committee was therefore very pleased with the prospect

of holding another inter-sessional meeting in the spring of 2006, in Berlin, and plans to use the meeting for substantive discussions, including on the draft general recommendation on article 2, and the proposals of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for a standing unified treaty body.

C. Request for extension of the meeting time of the Committee

29. On several occasions during the reporting period, the Committee discussed its ability to discharge all its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, as well as the constraints resulting from the Committee's limited meeting time. As it continued to enhance its working methods, the Committee also considered other options, including the consideration of periodic reports in parallel working groups (see CEDAW/C/2004/I/4/Add.2) and the extension of its annual meeting time.

30. The Committee was aware that the General Assembly had approved the holding of an exceptional session in 2002 to enable it to clear the backlog of reports that awaited consideration. However, at the beginning of the Committee's thirtieth session (January 2004), a new backlog of reports from 33 States parties had accumulated. By the Committee's thirty-third session (July 2005), the backlog had increased, with the reports of 58 States parties awaiting consideration. A table indicating the status of ratifications, the number of reports received annually since 1982, as well as the number of reports considered by the Committee annually, is contained in annex I to the present report. A table indicating the number of ratifications/accessions and the annual meeting time of and average number of reports considered per session by the seven human rights treaty bodies is contained in annex II.

31. As a consequence, the Committee submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a request for authorization of an extension of its meeting time (decision 31/1), on which no action was taken by the General Assembly. The Committee reiterated the urgent need to find a solution in line with its decision 31/1 and considered all options at its thirty-third session.

32. The Committee's decision requesting an extension of its meeting time is contained in part two of its annual report to the General Assembly[1]. The Committee requests the General Assembly: (a) to authorize the Committee to hold three annual sessions of three weeks each, with a one-week pre-sessional working group for each session, effective from January 2006; and (b) to authorize the Committee to meet, on a temporary basis in 2006 and 2007, for part of its three annual sessions in parallel working groups, for the purposes of considering reports of States parties submitted under article 18 of the Convention. In particular, the Committee requests approval to meet for up to seven days in parallel working groups during its third (July/August) annual session in 2006, and its first (January) and third (July/August) annual sessions in 2007. The Committee notes that it intends to evaluate its experience and the need for parallel working groups in July/August 2007 with a view to submitting a new recommendation to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. The Committee further requests the General Assembly (c) to continue to authorize two annual sessions of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol. A statement of the programme budget

implications of the requested extension of the meeting time is contained in the Committee's annual report mentioned above.

D. Working methods with regard to the Optional Protocol

33. During the reporting period, the Committee significantly expanded its activities under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. It has so far allocated up to two meetings per session to deal with all matters relating to the Optional Protocol.

34. The Committee's Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol held a three-day session in conjunction with each of the Committee's four sessions during the reporting period. The Working Group has so far registered nine communications (the first in June 2003). On the basis of the Working Group's recommendations, the Committee, at its thirty-first session, took action on communication 1/2003, declaring it inadmissible. At its thirty-second session, the Committee took action on communication 2/2003 (*Ms. A. T. v. Hungary*), finding a violation of several articles of the Convention.

35. The Working Group further refined its working methods and appointed case rapporteurs for each newly registered case. It enhanced its working methods in regard to work between sessions on registration of new communications, and the review and preparation of draft recommendations by case rapporteurs. The Working Group discussed a number of issues arising in conjunction with communications, including the question of admissibility *ratione temporis*, follow-up to views, and article 5 of the Optional Protocol on interim measures, supported by notes prepared by its secretariat. It considered these questions in the light of the Optional Protocol and its rules of procedure, as well as the practice of other human rights treaty bodies with similar procedures.

36. At its thirty-first session, the Committee completed its first inquiry under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, which also included a visit to the territory of the State party, Mexico.[3] It issued its substantive findings and recommendations emanating from its inquiry, together with the State party's observations, in January 2005. The Committee has invited the State party to include, in accordance with article 9, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol, details of measures taken in response to the Committee's inquiry in its sixth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention.

37. The Committee continued its work under article 8 of the Optional Protocol during the period under review. In accordance with the provisions of rules 80 and 81 of the Committee's rules of procedure, all documents and proceedings of the Committee relating to its functions under article 8 of the Optional Protocol are confidential and all meetings concerning its proceedings under that article are closed.

IV. Efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention, its Optional Protocol and acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention

38. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women have continued their efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and to ensure acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, which relates to the meeting time allocated to the Committee. They have encouraged related action in their meetings with delegations, as well as in statements and presentations at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at other duty stations, as well as at conferences and seminars.

39. During the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which undertook a 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the issues of universal ratification of the Convention and the ratification of the Optional Protocol were addressed by the Special Adviser and the Director of the Division. One of the panel discussions during the Commission focused on synergies between national-level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

V. Technical assistance provided to States parties

40. The Division for the Advancement of Women continues to offer technical assistance to States parties, at their request, on implementation of, and reporting under the Convention, as well as follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments. Assistance also involves ratification and use of the Optional Protocol.

41. During the reporting period, the Division organized three subregional training workshops on the implementation of the Convention. Over 70 Government officials from 37 countries participated in the three events, which took place from 11 to 13 September 2003 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in cooperation with the Government of that country; from 19 to 21 May 2004 in Nassau, in cooperation with the Government of the Bahamas; and from 30 May to 1 June 2005 in Santiago, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The overall objective of the workshops was to promote women's human rights through the enhanced implementation of the Convention at the domestic level. The workshops were aimed at achieving this objective by enhancing the capacity of Government officials to implement the Convention, prepare reports, and plan and implement follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments. In each case, experts from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women served as resource persons and facilitators.

42. In conjunction with each of these training workshops, the Division also convened regional judicial colloquiums focusing on the application of international human rights law, and in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, at the domestic level. The colloquiums were held from 9 to 11 September 2003 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in

cooperation with the Government of that country, from 17 to 19 May 2004 in Nassau, in cooperation with the Government of the Bahamas, and from 25 to 27 May 2005 in Santiago, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Over 50 judicial officers from 29 countries participated in the events. The objective of the colloquiums was to enhance the protection of women's human rights in domestic courts. They examined how international human rights law, and in particular the Convention, could be used for the protection of the rights and interests of women and girls and as an aid and guide to constitutional and statutory interpretation by judges in domestic courts. Participants in the colloquiums adopted statements and reports on challenges and recommendations relating to the use of international human rights treaty law pertaining to women's and girls' human rights in the resolution of cases. Funding for the colloquiums was provided by the Government of Germany.

43. The Division collaborated with the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific in a workshop for Government officials of countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States on implementation of and reporting under the Convention in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 12 to 14 May 2004. Fourteen Government officials from six countries of the region participated in the event, while an expert from the Committee served as a resource person and facilitator.

44. The Division for the Advancement of Women has initiated a sustained programme of support for countries emerging from conflict to implement their obligations under the Convention, with funding provided by the Government of New Zealand. It has received requests for this support from three countries (Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Timor Leste); work has commenced in each of these countries to develop and deliver a tailor-made programme of support. The objective of the programme is to facilitate enhanced implementation of the Convention in countries emerging from conflict through high-level consultations, deliver training and increase visibility and political support for implementation of the Convention, as well as the development of a comprehensive set of recommendations for priority action by governmental, non-governmental and international bodies.

45. The Division for the Advancement of Women undertook a two-phase technical assistance project with the Government of Sierra Leone to strengthen the capacity of Government officials to implement the Convention. The first phase was carried out from 25 to 27 October 2004. A team of internationally recognized experts held consultations with high-level Government officials (ministry/department heads) in key ministries, then prepared a report with recommendations for priority action by the Government in the field of legislative reform, policy and programme measures, cooperation with civil society and cooperation with the international community. The second phase of the project consisted of two training workshops, held from 4 to 8 April 2005 for Government officials on the implementation of the Convention. The first workshop was designed to enhance the role of catalyst of national machinery for the advancement of women in the promotion and implementation of the provisions of the Convention vis-à-vis other ministries and non-governmental organizations, and in the development of a national gender policy. The second workshop examined the role of line ministries in the implementation of the Convention and its relevance and applicability in a number of substantive sectors, including those of health, education, justice and economic development. A total of 35 Government officials attended both workshops. Experts of the Committee participated as experts/resource persons in both events.

46. A similar high-level consultation mission, intended to sensitize ministers and senior officials in key ministries in Afghanistan on the provisions of the Convention and to develop appropriate recommendations for priority action for enhanced implementation, was scheduled for May 2005, but had to be postponed. Alternative dates for the mission are currently being discussed.

47. The Division, as well as an expert of the Committee, participated in workshops on reporting organized by the Government of Timor-Leste and held in September 2004. At the request of the Office for the Promotion of Equality, the Division supported the participation of another expert from the Committee in March 2005, to assist in a series of workshops to discuss the responsibilities of various line ministries in the preparation of Timor-Leste's initial report under the Convention, including the collection of appropriate sex-disaggregated data and information.

48. The Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), organized a round table with the participation of national human rights institutions and national machineries for the advancement of women from 15 to 19 November 2004, in Ouarzazate, Morocco. The round table was hosted by the Conseil consultatif des droits de l'homme du Maroc and brought together representatives of national human rights institutions and national machineries for the advancement of women from 14 countries from all regions of the world. The objective of the round table — the first-ever of its type — was to build the capacity of institutions to discuss opportunities for collaboration and for joint strategies for more effective promotion and protection of women's human rights. The round table adopted recommendations, which were aimed at strengthening the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women and national human rights institutions to promote and protect the human rights of women through the development of institutional links and joint strategies (see E/CN.4/2005/106). Two experts from the Committee served as resource persons at the event.

49. The Division continued development of training materials to support its technical cooperation programme and to assist in efforts to raise awareness about the Convention and its Optional Protocol. A manual on the implementation of the Convention is being prepared in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights at the University of Utrecht, with funding by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. A workshop was held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, from 12 to 14 May 2005, to assess the appropriateness and suitability of the draft chapters for the various constituencies for which the manual is intended. The manual is scheduled for completion before the end of the year. It is part of the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR (see E/CN.6/2003/5, para. 13).

50. The Division continued its collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in one-day briefing sessions for parliamentarians from countries whose reports had recently been or would soon be considered by the Committee. The sessions took place on 4 October 2003 and 2 October 2004, with another session being planned for October 2005. In both events, experts from the Committee served as presenters and resource persons.

51. On behalf of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division participated in a two-day conference, organized and hosted by the Government of Croatia and United Nations

Development Fund for Women in Dubrovnik (Croatia) on 25 and 26 October 2003, on the implementation of the Convention in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The event was spearheaded by three experts from the Committee and provided an opportunity to review achievements and assess obstacles and challenges in two areas: women in political and public life, and domestic violence against women. It also drew up a set of recommendations for action by the six Governments concerned, including national machineries to enhance implementation of the Convention. The statement adopted by the Conference was subsequently submitted to the General Assembly (A/C.3/58/8).

VI. Dissemination of the Convention, its Optional Protocol and information on the work of the Committee

52. The Division for the Advancement of Women maintains a page on its website that is dedicated to the Convention and its Optional Protocol and the work of the Committee. The text of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the reports of States parties, lists of issues and questions, responses from States parties, the Committee's concluding comments and documents prepared for the Committee, as well as other relevant information concerning the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the working methods of the Committee and the meetings of States parties are posted on the website. The Committee's concluding comments are also disseminated through the electronic listserv administered by OHCHR.

53. Noting that only the documentation of recent years is available on the Division's website, the Committee has suggested that the Division prepare an estimate of resources required to electronically store and make available on the website the documentation relating to the consideration of reports of States parties for the early years of operation of the Committee.

54. During the reporting period, the Division wrote to national machineries for the advancement of women, national human rights institutions and selected non-governmental organizations, including lawyers and bar associations, in an effort to disseminate information about the communications procedure under the Optional Protocol and encourage its further dissemination at the national level. Information about the procedure was also provided to different stakeholders in conjunction with intergovernmental and expert meetings held at United Nations Headquarters.

55. The Division had a new edition of the booklet containing the Convention and the Optional Protocol printed in the six official United Nations languages, using extrabudgetary resources. A limited number of copies of the booklet, in relevant languages, have been made available to the regional commissions.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

56. **The Committee has significantly enhanced its working methods to improve the constructive dialogue with States parties and to discharge all its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol. However, the number of reports received annually on average far exceeds the capacity of the Committee to consider them within its current annual meeting time, leading to the accumulation of a backlog of reports awaiting consideration. The**

Committee also contributes to common efforts of all treaty bodies through inter-committee meetings and meetings of chairpersons on the harmonization of reporting procedures and enhanced implementation of the human rights treaties at the national level. Technical assistance provided by the Committee's secretariat, funded to a large extent by extrabudgetary resources, contributes to the strengthening of the capacity of States parties to implement the Convention, including the reporting obligation.

57. **The General Assembly may wish to approve the Committee's request for extension of its meeting time so as to enable the Committee to discharge its responsibilities in a timely and effective manner.**

Notes

[1] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/60/38).

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7* and corrigendum (E/2005/27 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. D.

[3] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 38*, part two, chap. V, sect. B.

Annex I

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: ratification and reporting status as at 31 July 2005

Year and session	*Number of ratifications by countries*	*Number of reports submitted*	*Number of countries whose reports were considered*	*Number of reports considered*
1980	10	0		0
1981	21	0		0
1982 — first	11	7		0
1983 — second	8	12	7	7
1984 — third	11	5	6	6
1985 — fourth	20	4	5	5
1986 — fifth	7	16	8	8
1987 — sixth	3	19	8	8
1988 — seventh	1	12	13	13
1989 — eighth	5	11	9	9
1990 — ninth	4	13	12	12
1991 — tenth	7	17	10	10
1992 — eleventh	10	13	9	9
1993 — twelfth	11	12	11	12
1994 — thirteenth	8	12	15	17
1995 — fourteenth	13	7	10	11
1996 — fifteenth	3	17	9	9
1997 — sixteenth and seventeenth	7	19	18	23
1998 — eighteenth and nineteenth	2	23	16	18
1999 — twentieth and twenty-first	2	24	14	17
2000 — twenty-second and twenty-third	1	24	15	20
2001 — twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth	3	11	16	22
2002 — twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh and exceptional sessions	2	29	26	31
2003 — twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth	5	24	16	23
2004 — thirtieth and thirty-first	4	34	16	19
2005 — thirty-second and thirty-third	1	23 (as at 31 July 2005)	16	18

Annex II

Human rights treaty bodies: number of ratifications; number and duration of sessions per year as at 31 July 2005

Human rights instrument	*Number of ratifications*	*Treaty body*	*Number of sessions per year and approximate dates*	*Number of reports considered annually (average)*
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	180	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Two, of three weeks each (in January-February; in July), each preceded by a one-week pre-session working group of five members	16
Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	71	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Three, of three days each (in January and July)	
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	154	Human Rights Committee	Three, of three weeks each (1. March-April; 2. July-August; 3. October-November)	10
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	105	Human Rights Committee	Three one-week working groups, of at least five members	
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	151	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Two, of three weeks each (1. April-May; 2. November-December), each with a one-week pre-session working group of five members	10
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	170	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Two, of three weeks each (1. February-March; 2. July-August)	16 to 22
International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (declaration under article 14 — communications procedure)	43 (as at 2003)	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination		
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	140	Committee against Torture	Two, of two weeks and of three weeks, respectively, with a one-week pre-session working group (1. April-May; 2. November)	12

Human rights instrument	*Number of ratifications*	*Treaty body*	*Number of sessions per year and approximate dates*	*Number of reports considered annually (average)*
Convention on the Rights of the Child	192	Committee on the Rights of the Child	Three, of three weeks each (1. January; 2. May; 3. September), each with a one-week pre-session working group of the entire Committee	27
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	30	Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	Two, of one week each	n/a